Atelier du Noir Presents
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Like a Laika

by Yamazaki Ren

A slice of space exploration life.

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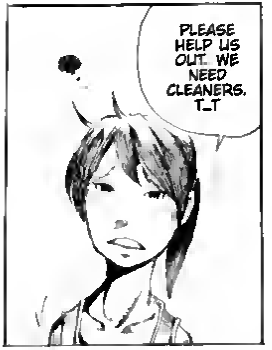
Quality Check: Davey94 & Mztlplx



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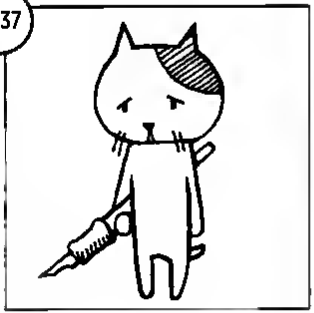
JIRO TANIGUCHI – SPECIAL PRIZE

p 137

"LIKE A LAIKA" — YAMAZAKI REN

When this manga was drawn, my physical condition was deteriorating from the stress of my job and other things. When I got a bit of a break from work, I fought off various anxieties as I sat alone in my room continuing my work. I convinced myself that this story should be interesting and light and..... Oh, shoot. The story is too dark. However, it is really heart-warming to see that people think my manga is interesting. I can't even express how I feel right now, and I can only say this: thank you so much!



JIRO TANIGUCHI'S SPECIAL AWARD

ライカ ライカ
—LIKE A LAIKA—

#01
Ship Captain

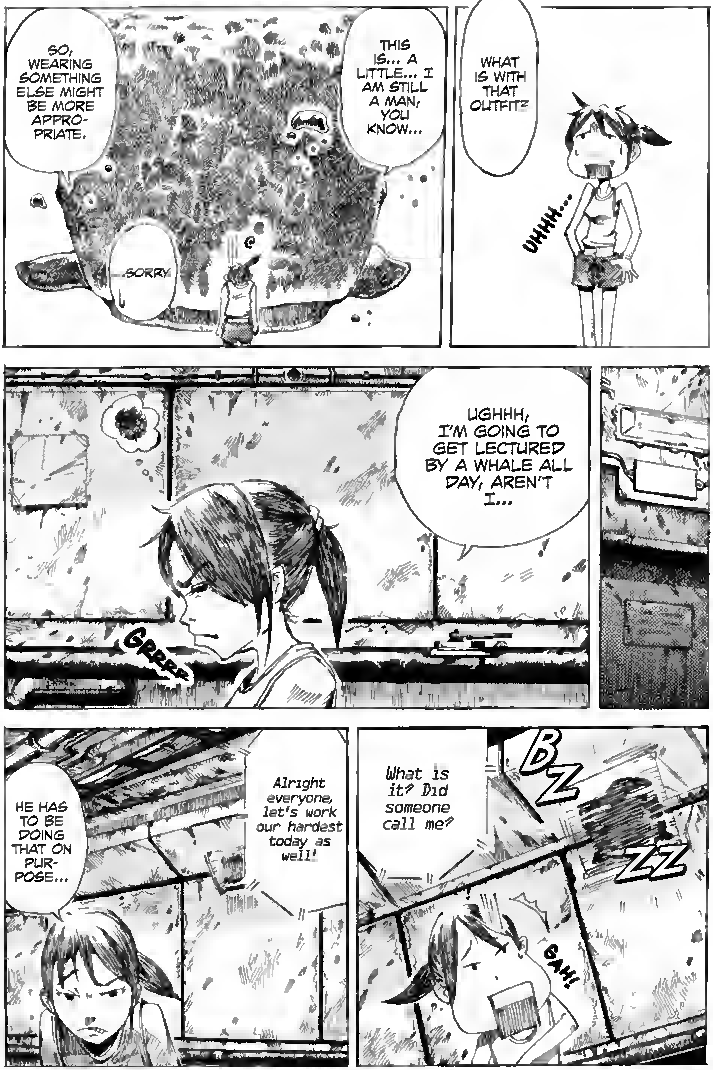
Yamazaki Ren

GOOD MORN- I... WHAT? YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ALL NIGHT? THAT REALLY ISN'T GOOD FOR YOUR SKIN
SHUT UP!!
UGHHHH...
GOOD MORNING!! The weather in Tokyo is clear this morning, and it will be hot for the rest of the day as well...
I'M GONNA GO TALK TO THE CAPTAIN.
AAARRGH...
AH! SUCH BAD MANNERS.
THUD
MY PAPER ISN'T DONE YET. UGHHHH, SO BOTHER-SOME...
IT'S CRAMPED AS USUAL...
CAUTION

GOOD MORNING!
MORNING!! LATE, AREN'T YOU?
SORRY ABOUT THAT... HOW'S THE CAPTAIN?
SEEMS TO BE IN A GOOD MOOD.
I SEE...
I'M HERE...
CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS
ZOOM!
BEEP
CLUNK

GOOD MORNING, CAPTAIN.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
GOOD MORNING, MATSUMOTO-KUN.
HIS FACE IS SO CLOSE!!
THREE MORE DAYS!!
IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE GETTING CLOSER TO THE SUN. AFTER ABOUT THREE DAYS, THE SUN'S INFLUENCE SHOULD GET WEAKER, BUT...
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE SHOULDER STIFFNESS.
THE SOLAR WINDS BURN ME.
NOT TOO BAD. AS USUAL, MY SHOULDERS ARE A BIT STIFF.
BY THE WAY, MATSUMOTO-KUN..
YES, WHAT IS IT?
SNAP
YOU'RE A GROWN-UP NOW, PLEASE BE A LITTLE PATIENT!


SO, WEARING SOMETHING ELSE MIGHT BE MORE APPRO-PRIATE.
THIS IS... A LITTLE... I AM STILL A MAN, YOU KNOW...
SORRY.
WHAT IS WITH THAT OUTFIT?
UHHH...
UGHHH, I'M GOING TO GET LECTURED BY A WHALE ALL DAY, AREN'T I...
GRRR
HE HAS TO BE DOING THAT ON PUR-POSE...
Alright everyone, let's work our hardest today as well!
What is it? Did someone call me?
BZ
ZZ
EAH!

A CERTAIN DAY IN AUGUST, 2515. NO ABNORMALITIES ON THE FLIGHT TODAY.

IT WAS A PEACEFUL DAY, TOO.

FROM MATSUMOTO'S DAILY LOG

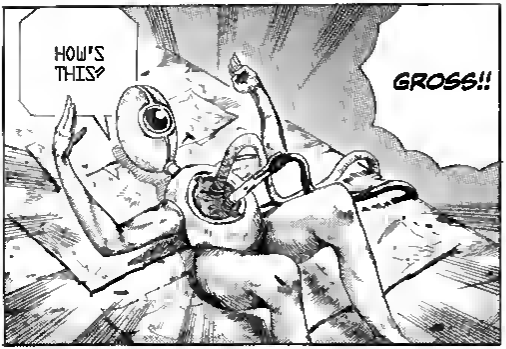
#01 Ends

ライカ ライカ
−LIKE A LAIKA−

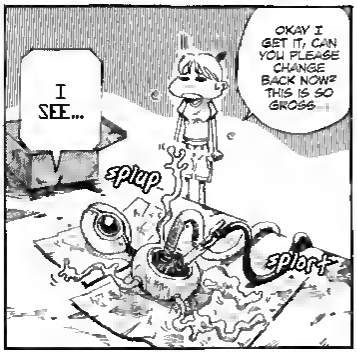
#02
Endo-kun

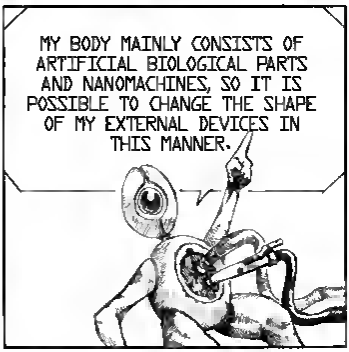
AAAAAH... I'M HUNGRY.
CLICK
CLACK
HM?
WHAT'S THIS?
IT'S A HELPER DROID. THERE AREN'T ENOUGH PEOPLE TO DO EVERYTHING ON THIS SHIP.

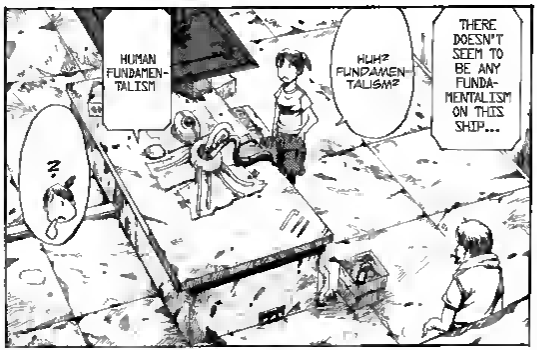
WHOA!! IT TALKED!!
GOOD MORNING.
OHHH... IT'S A ROBOT, RIGHT?
I THINK YOU LOOK LIKE A LITTLE PERSON...
stroke stroke
UH, PLEASE STOP.
GOOOD...
THANK YOU
WHAT ARE YOU, SOME COUNTRY BUMPKIN?
SCRUB
SCRUB
IF YOU'LL WATCH, I CAN CHANGE AS WELL...
IS THAT SO? THAT'S A LITTLE BORING.
THAT IS HIGHLY UNNECESSARY. YOU SEE, IT'S BEST TO HAVE A SHAPE THAT ADAPTS TO THE TASK AT HAND, SO THERE'S NO REAL REASON THAT A HUMANOID SHAPE IS BETTER. IT'S JUST A HUMAN BIAS TO MAKE HUMANOID LOOKING THINGS...
Decoration
This stuff is just decoration


HOW'S THIS?
GROSS!!

UGH...
splort


I SEE...
OKAY I GET IT, CAN YOU PLEASE CHANGE BACK NOW? THIS IS SO GROSS...
splup
splort


MY BODY MAINLY CONSISTS OF ARTIFICIAL BIOLOGICAL PARTS AND NANOMACHINES, SO IT IS POSSIBLE TO CHANGE THE SHAPE OF MY EXTERNAL DEVICES IN THIS MANNER.


?
HUMAN FUNDAMEN-TALISM
HUH? FUNDAMEN-TALISM?
THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANY FUNDA-MENTALISM ON THIS SHIP...

BY THE WAY...

AH, SO YOU CAN SOMEHOW UNDERSTAND THIS CONVERSATION...
OHHH...
IT'S THE BELIEF THAT ANYTHING THAT ISN'T HUMAN SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO HAVE INTELLIGENCE ON PAR WITH THAT OF HUMANITY.
WELL, IN ANCIENT TIMES PEOPLE THOUGHT THAT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WAS GROWING TOO QUICKLY. THEY TRULY BELIEVED IT POSED A THREAT TO HUMANITY AND COULD ENSLAVE IT.
WHAT???!!! DON'T PISS ME OFF!
BECAUSE IT'S UNNECESSARY.
WHY WOULD ROBOTS WANT TO RULE OVER HUMANITY?
YEAH
I DON'T KNOW. SO YOU'D BE ABLE TO CONTROL MANKIND AS YOU WISHED?
IF SOMEONE SAID THAT TO ME, I'D THINK IT WAS UTTER NONSENSE.
AHHH. I'VE SEEN THAT KIND OF THING IN MOVIES A LOT.
WHY?

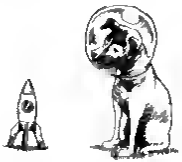
OF COURSE, WE CAN STILL BREAK. HOWEVER, OUR DATA IS CONTINUOUSLY BEING BACKED UP, SO WE CAN ALWAYS REBUILD OURSELVES TO OUR ORIGINAL STATES.
Shine
ALSO, WE ROBOTS HAVE NO CONCEPT OF DEATH.
WELL HYPOTHETICALLY, IF WE RULED OVER MANKIND, THERE'S NO POINT TO USING HUMANS AS A MANUAL LABOR FORCE. UNLIKE MACHINES, PEOPLE GET TIRED AND HAVE TO EAT. MANAGEMENT ALONE WOULD BE VERY COSTLY. I DON'T THINK THAT IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL.
WHAT?
RATHER, WE THINK IT IS MORE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SIMPLY COEXIST.
YEAH... I KIND OF UNDERSTAND, BUT NOT COMPLETELY...
WE ARE FREE FROM THE BURDEN OF HAVING TO THINK ABOUT THINGS LIKE THE PRESERVATION OF OUR SPECIES. WE FEEL NO REAL NEED TO PROTECT ROBOT KIND.
I... WOW... THAT'S TRUE, ISN'T IT...
IN OTHER WORDS, FROM MY OBSERVATIONS IT IS MUCH MORE ENJOYABLE TO EXIST TOGETHER WITH HUMANS.
BECAUSE WE SHARE ALL OUR SO-CALLED INTELLIGENCE, THERE REALLY IS NO SUCH THING AS AN INDIVIDUAL. IF ONLY ROBOTS WERE LEFT, EVENTUALLY IT WOULD BE A BIG BLOW TO OUR INTELLECT. CONTACT WITH HUMAN BEINGS IS WHAT ADVANCES OUR KNOWLEDGE.

OH, SORRY.
THIS CONVERSATION IS GREAT AND ALL, BUT I'M GOING TO NEED HIM BACK SOON.
YES. OUR ONE LIMITATION IS HAVING THE SAME METHOD OF THINKING AS HUMANS, WE CANNOT GO ANY LOWER OR HIGHER THAN THAT.
BESIDES, THERE IS NO WAY WE WILL EVER SURPASS HUMANS.
REALLY?
YAAWNNN
YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE ME STAND YOUR LAZY ASS UP AREN'T YOU?
THAT WOULD BE NICE.
WHOAAA.
OK, THAT'S BETTER.

WHY DOESN'T HE HAVE A NAME?
MY MANUFACTURING ID IS E-N-D-O MODEL 78364.
SO THEN, WHAT'S THIS THING'S NAME?
IT'S ENDO!!
!!
WHAT!?
.....END...
YEAH... E-N-D...
.....O...
O, MODEL...
YES... THAT'S EASIER TO SAY... THERE'S SOMETHING PLEASANT ABOUT IT... WELL THEN, NICE TO MEET YOU, TOO.
SO YOU'LL BE CALLED ENDO-KUN FROM NOW ON, NICE TO MEET YOU.
#02 Ends

ライカ ライカ

－LIKE A LAIKA－



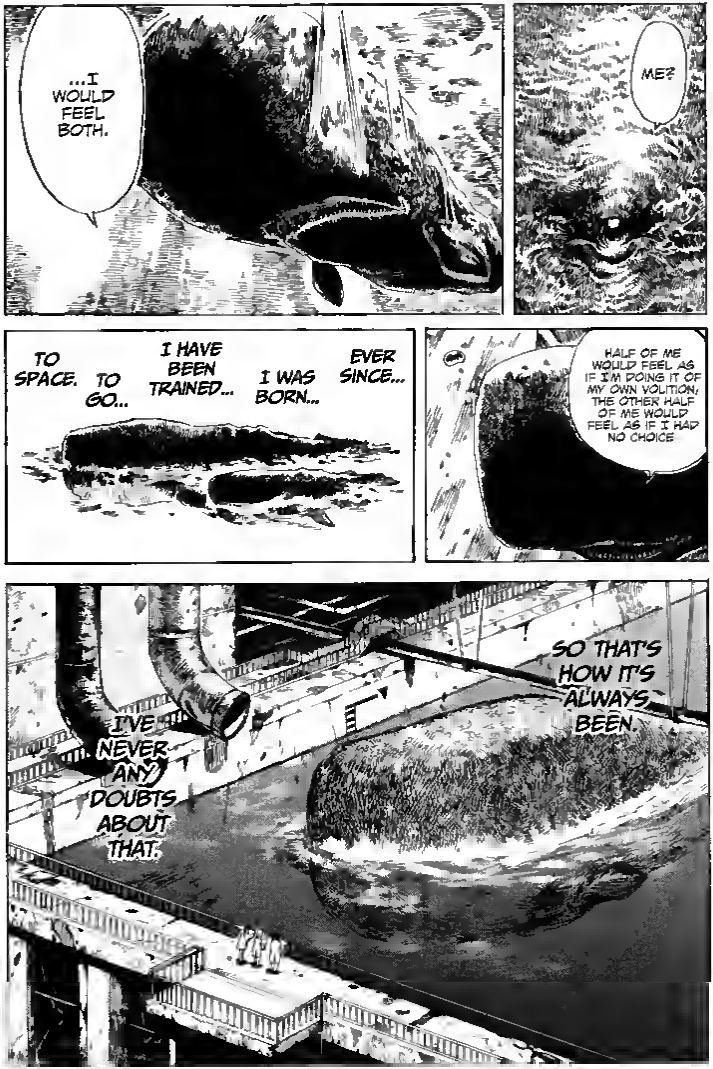
#03
Like a Laika

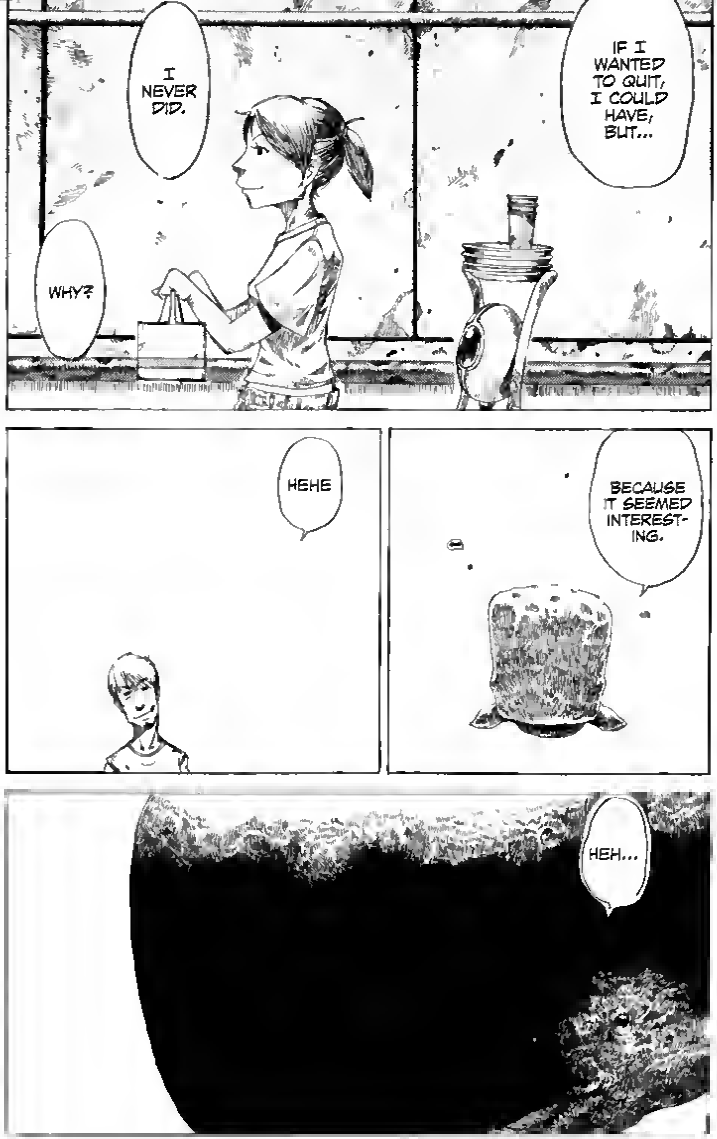
*T/N: LAIKA, A DOG, WAS LAUNCHED BY RUSSIA INTO ORBIT IN 1958. SHE WAS THE FIRST LIVING THING FROM EARTH IN SPACE.

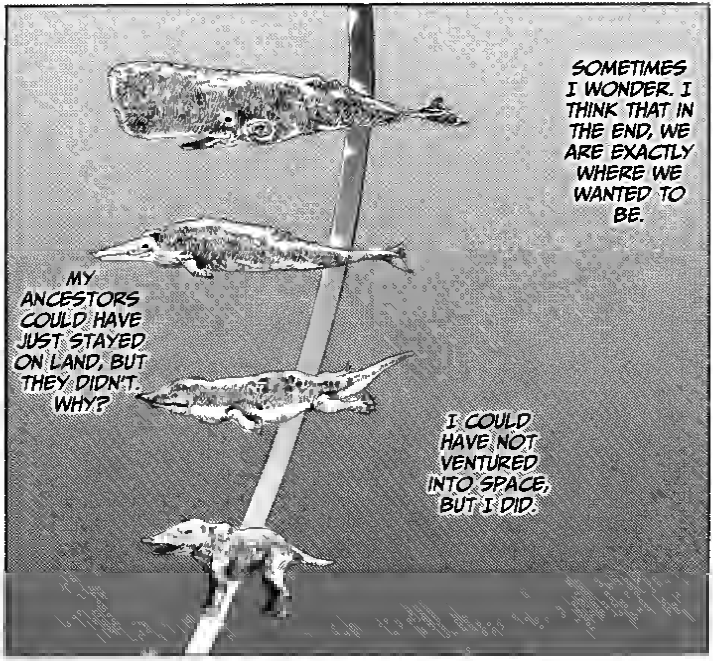
UNFORTUNATELY, IT WASN'T A HUMAN BEING.
I HEARD THAT THE FIRST LIVING THING FROM EARTH TO VENTURE OUT INTO THE COSMOS WAS A DOG*
DO YOU THINK SHE WAS HAPPY TO HAVE THE HONOR OF SERVING AS THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR ALL LIVING CREATURES ON EARTH?
SINCE THE BEGINNING OF LIFE ON THE PLANET, SHE IS THE FIRST EARTH CREATURE TO HAVE THAT EXPERIENCE. I WONDER HOW SHE FELT ABOUT THAT.
I DON'T THINK SHE KNEW WHAT SHE WAS DOING AT ALL, OR WAS CONSCIOUS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF IT.**

**T/N: THE AUTHOR USES THE MALE PRONOUN TO REFER TO THE FIRST DOG IN THE SPACE, BUT IT WAS ACTUALLY A FEMALE DOG.

SO THEY SAID "LET'S TRY SPACE TRAVEL WITH A DOG FIRST".
PEOPLE ARE AFRAID OF DEATH,
SHE PROBABLY DIDN'T WANT THAT FOR HERSELF.
YOU THINK SO?
SHE DIDN'T DREAM OF DOING THAT, DID SHE, HAMADA-KUN?
NO, THERE ISN'T...
BUT THAT ONLY MEANS THAT AS FAR AS ANY POSITIVE PROOF THAT SHE WANTED TO DO IT...
THERE'S NO PROOF THAT SHE DIDN'T WANT TO DO IT THOUGH, IS THERE?
HOW WOULD YOU FEEL, CAP-TAIN?
HEH.
THERE ISN'T ANY.


...I WOULD FEEL BOTH.
ME?
TO SPACE.
TO GO...
I HAVE BEEN TRAINED...
I WAS BORN...
EVER SINCE...
HALF OF ME WOULD FEEL AS IF I'M DOING IT OF MY OWN VOLITION, THE OTHER HALF OF ME WOULD FEEL AS IF I HAD NO CHOICE
I'VE NEVER ANY DOUBTS ABOUT THAT.
SO THAT'S HOW IT'S ALWAYS BEEN.


WHY?
I NEVER DID.
IF I WANTED TO QUIT, I COULD HAVE, BUT...
HEHE
BECAUSE IT SEEMED INTEREST-ING.
HEH...


SOMETIMES I WONDER. I THINK THAT IN THE END, WE ARE EXACTLY WHERE WE WANTED TO BE.
MY ANCESTORS COULD HAVE JUST STAYED ON LAND, BUT THEY DIDN'T. WHY?
I COULD HAVE NOT VENTURED INTO SPACE, BUT I DID.

I SEE...
THAT'S PRECISELY IT.
IN THE SAME WAY WE ARE OUT HERE EXPLORING IN THIS WORN DOWN SHIP.

BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO EXPLORE?

Well... Anyways, please just come quickly!!
LET'S CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION LATER
SIGH...
BZZZ
HM? WHAT IS IT?
Hamada-san, there's a problem!! Please come quickly to the meeting room!!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, HAMADA-SAN!!
WHAT IS IT!?
IT WAS REALLY TOUGH TO GET THIS ALL TOGETHER SECRETLY.
HEY HEY, IT'S A CAKE!
AH?
I'M CERTAINLY WILLING TO STAY HERE.
WHAT!?
...I'M SORRY BUT, TODAY IS ACTUALLY MY MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY.
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THAT DOG EVER WANTED TO GO TO SPACE, BUT...
Like a Laika Ends